

Standard USHC-4: The student will demonstrate an understanding of the causes and the course of the Civil War and Reconstruction in America.

USHC-4.2 Explain how the political events and issues that divided the nation led to civil war, including the compromises reached to maintain the balance of free and slave states, the successes and failures of the abolitionist movement, the conflicting views on states' rights and federal authority, the emergence of the Republican Party and its win in 1860, and the formation of the Confederate States of America. (H, P)

Taxonomy Level: 2B – Understand/Conceptual Knowledge

Previous/future knowledge:

In the 4th grade, the students were introduced to how specific events and issues led to the Civil War including the sectionalism fueled by issues of slavery in the territories, states' rights, the election of 1860, and secession (4-6.3). They also summarized the roles and accomplishments of the leaders of the abolitionist movement and the Underground Railroad before and during the Civil War, including those of Harriet Tubman, John Brown, Frederick Douglass, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Sojourner Truth, and William Lloyd Garrison (4-6.2).

In the 8th grade, students explained the impact of key events leading to South Carolina's secession from the Union, the relationship of the nullification crisis, the Missouri Compromise, the Tariff of 1832, the Compromise of 1850, the Kansas-Nebraska Act and subsequent armed conflicts, the *Dred Scott* decision, the growth of the abolitionist movement, and the election of 1860 to the onset of the Civil War (8-3.2). They also compared the attitudes of the unionists, cooperationists, and secessionists in South Carolina and summarized the reasons that the members of the South Carolina secession convention in 1860 voted unanimously to secede from the Union (8-3.4).

It is essential for the students to know:

Students need to understand the role of westward expansion in relation to the expansion of slavery through the Missouri Compromise; the Mexican War and the Wilmot Proviso; the Compromise of 1850, popular sovereignty, and the Kansas-Nebraska Act, and the *Dred Scott* decision. These issues each exacerbated the division of the regions and the struggle to maintain the balance of **power between slave and free states** in the Senate.

Although the **abolitionist movement** kept the issue of slavery at the forefront of national conversation abolitionists did not significantly impact the actions of the national government. The numerous petitions that abolitionists sent to Congress fell victim to the 'gag rule.' Abolitionist candidates running under the banner of the Liberty Party did not win office. However, abolitionists did impact the sentiments of the people in both the North and the South. The publication of Garrison's *The Liberator* was banned in the South and shows the fear that such publications struck in that region. It is important for students to understand most northerners were not abolitionists. Indeed, abolitionists were not popular in the North. Abolitionists helped some slaves to escape to the North on the Underground Railroad. However, the numbers of escaped slaves were relatively small, especially in the deep South because of distance to free land. Harriet Beecher Stowe was successful as an abolitionist because her book *Uncle Tom's Cabin* reached many Northern readers and evoked popular sympathy for slaves and anger over the Fugitive Slave Laws. The abolitionist John Brown was the most infamous abolitionist. His actions at Harpers' Ferry struck fear in the hearts of slave owners and made them both determined to protect slavery and very fearful of the intentions of northerners. He was hailed as a martyr by vocal Northern abolitionists leading Southerners to believe the feeling was generalized in the North and thus further divided the North and the South. The actions of abolitionists and the controversy over the spread of slavery to the territories eventually led to secession, war, and, ultimately, abolition.

It was the free soil idea that proved most successful because it was the position of the **Republican Party** on the issue of slavery in the territories. Representative Wilmot's proposal that all territory taken in the Mexican War remain "free soil," was passed by the House of Representatives, but it did not get through the Senate and underscored the importance to the South of maintaining the balance of slave and free states. It is important to understand that the idea of free soil is not abolitionism. It means that whites did not want to compete with slave labor in the territories. The Free Soil Party was founded to limit the expansion of slavery into the territories. After the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act, the conflict that arose in "Bleeding Kansas" violated the democratic concept of popular sovereignty. So the Liberty Party, the "Free Soilers" and some members of the Whig Party formed the Republican Party, advocating the idea of free soil. It is essential that students understand that the Republicans and their candidate in 1860, Abraham Lincoln, were NOT abolitionists. The Republicans advocated that slavery should not be extended into the territories (free soil), but not abolition. This is a common misunderstanding. Lincoln's 1860 election as a champion of the free soil idea is due in part to the reaction to the *Dred Scott* decision. The Supreme Court decision was that the Missouri Compromise was unconstitutional because slaves were property and therefore could not be denied to slave owners regardless of where they took their slaves. This ruling led Northerners to fear that state laws and popular sovereignty would not be effective in restricting the spread of slavery.

Lincoln's election in 1860 led southern states to meet in convention and pass articles of secession stating that their rights as states were being violated by the federal government. The **conflicting views of states' rights and federal authority** had been evolving in the United States since the ratification of the Constitution and the development of the first political parties (USHC 2.6). However, all of these previous disagreements had been successfully resolved. It was the disagreement over expanding slavery into the territories that led southerners to argue that their rights as states were being violated by the federal government. They believed that the federal government under the leadership of President Lincoln would not allow slavery to expand into the territories. Thus, the balance of power in the Senate would be upset and the Congress would eventually vote to abolish slavery. So they formed the **Confederate States of America** and began to occupy the federal forts that were located in the South.

It is not essential for the students to know:

Students do not need to understand all of the arguments over states rights that preceded the secession in 1860 such the controversies between the political parties in the late 18th century or the nullification crisis. They do not need to know that the states' rights argument started with the disagreements between Hamilton and Jefferson that led to the emergence of the political parties and continued with the Alien and Sedition Acts and the Virginia and Kentucky resolutions and the controversy over the tariff that led to Calhoun's writing of the *South Carolina Exposition and Protest* and the nullification crisis. Although students need to know about "bleeding Kansas," they do not need to know about the conflicting constitutions in Kansas, the Lincoln Douglas debates, or the Freeport Doctrine. They do not need to know that the Democratic Party split in 1860 as a result of Douglas's Freeport Doctrine or that there were four candidates in 1860. They do not need to know the arguments made in the various articles of secession nor do they need to remember the counter arguments made by Lincoln in his First Inaugural Address.

Assessment guidelines:

Appropriate assessments will require students to **explain** the political events and issues that divided the nation and how they led to civil war. They should be able to **summarize** the compromises reached to maintain the balance of free and slave states and **evaluate** the successes and failures of the abolitionist movement. They should be able to **explain** the free soil position of the Republican Party and their candidate, Abraham Lincoln. They should be able to **compare** the conflicting views on states' rights and federal authority that led to the formation of the Confederate States of America. They should be able to

interpret maps, graphs, charts and political cartoons to **infer** their relationship to information about the time period.

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